

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 28th February 2022
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Children's Services

Report Title

Greater Manchester House Project Collaborative

Summary

The House Project is an opportunity working with other Greater Manchester Authorities to access funding together with the National House Project (NHP) to give a number of care leavers in the area an opportunity to access tenancies and support in becoming independent.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Executive:

- Note the intention for Trafford Council to participate in the House Project;
- Approve the making of any necessary agreements with other local authorities for the placing of staff at the disposal of those other authorities in relation to the House Project; and
- Delegate the ability to the Corporate Director for Children's Services to agree terms and conditions for the placement of Staff at the disposal of other Local Authorities in consultation with the Corporate Director for Governance and Community Strategy for the purposes of the House Project.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None

Implications:

<p>Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The outcomes of approval support a number of the Council's strategic outcomes within the corporate plan, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Parenting Strategy; the four cornerstones of a stable home, participation and engagement, education and being healthy. • Placement Sufficiency Statement which is a statutory requirement and identifies a lack of local move on options for care experienced young people • Links to the Corporate Plan supporting; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to quality learning, training and jobs; - communities to be happy, healthy and safe; - Supporting people out of poverty; preventing our care experienced young people from falling into poverty.
<p>Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework</p>	<p>Placement sufficiency is core element of the GM Children and Young People's Plan</p>
<p>Financial</p>	<p>This is an invest to save scheme in which the costs of the scheme over three years totalling £206k will be met from a reduction in the current placement costs of young people who join the project.</p>
<p>Legal Implications:</p>	<p>Under Part 3, Section 1 Point 17 of the Trafford Council Constitution it is required that the decision for the making of agreements with other local authorities for the placing of staff at the disposal of those other authorities has to be taken by the Executive.</p> <p>Legal advice will be provided in respect of any terms and conditions linked to the House Project.</p>
<p>Equality/Diversity Implications</p>	<p>An EIA will be completed as the first stage of the project plan The project will enable vulnerable young people with a higher level of support needs to remain in Trafford and be supported to live independently in a planned way.</p>
<p>Sustainability Implications</p>	<p>The number of children in care continues to rise and we expect to see an increase in the number of care experienced young people over the next three years so the project supports our sufficiency strategy actions for a wider range of local, affordable supported living services. As a three year project, if benefits are realised this model will be considered as a standing offer.</p>

Carbon Reduction	See guidance note Carbon reduction will relate to the housing providers supplying properties, potential partners supplying goods to the project and will be considered by the GM project collectively. With 6 young people per year the project will not have a significant impact on carbon reduction targets in the borough.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	Resources will be provided from within the core establishment. There will be expertise required from the following departments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegated officers of the corporate team identified • Commissioning • Legal • STAR Procurement • Finance • Place
Risk Management Implications	Entering into the GM House Project Agreement considers risks associated with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational risk of seconding a member of staff to be the local facilitator which creates need to recruit to the seconded post on a temporary basis. The fixed term of 3 years makes this an attractive opportunity for recruitment. • Strategic risk of housing providers; ensuring there are tenancies available for young people. Risk reduced via the GM Strategic Housing Partnership supporting the GM collaboration. • The GM Collaborative agreement details the process and risk associated with the exit of any partner authority to the project. The terms and conditions have received approval from legal officers.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The House Project is designed to improve health and well-being outcomes for young people. The collaborative model also ensures staff are able to access appropriate health and well-being services through the lead LA council (MCC). This is further supported by the access gained to psychological support from the NHP team to our local facilitator, providing added value to the support to our young people.
Health and Safety Implications	No direct implications.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Trafford Council is committed to working together to be the very best parents to our children in care. We want every care experienced young person to reach their full potential, to be healthy, happy safe and secure, and to feel loved, valued and respected. Within our Corporate Parenting Strategy the Council makes a commitment to providing our children with a stable and supportive home with caring, consistent relationships. We listen to our young people's wishes and feelings and know how important it is to them to feel supported in their journey to independence and the importance of helping them to live locally enabling them to maintain education and employment commitments and family and social networks.
- 1.2 Our Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2021 – 2023 highlighted the challenge we face in finding suitable support and accommodation of our care experienced young people (care leavers) and that too many of our young people remain in current purchased placements simply because there are little to no move-on options.
- 1.3 Whilst in recent years the Council has commissioned contracts for the support and accommodation of care experienced young people. In January 2022 there were 9 young people aged 16-17 in externally commissioned, supported accommodation placements with an average cost of £1,562 a week and 22 young people aged 18 or over in externally commissioned, supported accommodation placements at an average weekly cost of £874. Note these are not residential placements, which are more cost but semi-independent, supported living services. The GM House Project Collaborative ("House Project") proposal outlined in this report is one way to address our local placement sufficiency through a different kind of offer.
- 1.5 The Strategy highlights that in 2019/20 there was an increase in Trafford from 48 up to 56 care leavers whose 17th or 18th birthdays fell within the reporting year. In addition there were 122 care leavers whose 19th, 20th or 21st birthdays fell within the reporting year this is (up from 116 the previous year). This is a total of 178 care leavers, a yearly increase of 8.5%. We know this is going to be an upward trend due to the age and profile of our looked after children.
- 1.6 Care Experienced young people include those young people who have been looked after previously but no longer receive a service from the local authority. When we look at the type of suitable accommodation for care leavers, the largest single category of type is independent living at 25% although this is lower than all comparators which range from 35% nationally and 42% for statistical neighbours. 15% of our young people leaving care are supported through semi-independent accommodation which is higher than all comparators.
- 1.7 This data tells us we have more people in supported accommodation than in other areas and less ready to live independently. The House Project presents an opportunity to change this and support more of our young people to live independently and to maintain good oversight and influence over the way in which we support our young people to reach independence, with less reliance on external placement providers.

2.0 The House Project

- 2.1 The National House Project (NHP) charity has received funding from the Department for Education Innovation Programme and provides an opportunity to increase and

further enhance our range and choice of accommodation for young people who are care experienced.

- 2.2 The aim of the House Project is to better prepare care leavers for independence, take ownership and responsibility for their accommodation and support them to improve their outcomes. The evidence from other House Project sites indicates the service is effectively improving outcomes for care leavers and has reduced demand on supported accommodation from young people that are willing and able to live independently with support.
- 2.3 There are 13 existing House Projects in England and Scotland, supporting 270 young people; 170 of those living in their own properties with no evictions or tenancy breakdowns to date.
- 2.4 The NHP has secured funding to trial how the House Project could be delivered as part of a sub-regional collaboration. The funding of £50,000 for the GM collaborative off sets some of year one costs for membership to trial this approach across Greater Manchester.

3.0 The Model

- 3.1 The NHP provides an Outcomes and Learning framework, named ORCHIDS and this is the framework for supporting young people to develop their independent living skills. All HP staff will be trained on the framework, as a model of support for young people participating in the House Project.
- 3.2 ORCHIDS was developed in partnership with the Care Leavers National Movement and is an accredited programme. It allows local projects to track the progress of young people in the House Project and to assess their readiness for a tenancy.
- 3.3 The model of support is AQA accredited which means young people in the House Project are classed as being in education.
- 3.4 Local House Projects are then able to input data into the online system, a web based platform. Data is anonymised and provides valuable aggregated data on the outcomes of the project.
- 3.5 The support element takes place over 6-9 months and bonds the group as a peer support network. The group will be supported by one full time Trafford facilitator and a local community base will be identified to accommodate the group to work alongside each other as they move through the ORCHIDS framework.
- 3.6 As part of the GM collaboration the Trafford House Project will partner with another LA (Stockport is the identified partner for Trafford and this will be confirmed following executive approval for Stockport to join the GM Collaboration). This means we receive support from their full time facilitator and the peer group will consist of 8-12 young people working together, creating more opportunity for young people to form a support network. The feedback from young people is that one of the main successes of the project is moving through their journey to independence with a group of peers who are experiencing the same pathway.
- 3.7 At the end of the accredited support programme commissioners will have worked in partnership with housing providers to secure a tenancy for the young person to move

in at 17 years old where they continue to be supported by the House Project team and network of peers.

- 3.8 Whilst support may taper as young people become more confident and develop their independence continues, the young people remain part of the house project for as long as is needed. Young people say this ongoing support is crucial to sustaining their tenancies, they feel safe and supported as part of the peer group and project.
- 3.9 Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Partnership is committed to the project and early discussions with a number of Trafford housing providers indicates tenancies will be made available on an annual basis for this small group of young people when they are tenancy ready.
- 3.10 An integral part of the project is the engagement of local agencies and business which support the young people with employment and training opportunities, trade support to make tenancies ready, working wardrobe initiatives to help with clothing for employment, white goods providers etc. Of the 13 House Project established nationally there are some exemplary models of partnership working which we intend to replicate in Trafford to make the House Project a success.

4.0 Greater Manchester Collaborative Agreement

- 4.1 Manchester City Council are the designated lead with responsibility for overall project management of the collaborative comprising of 5 other LA areas: Bury; Oldham; Rochdale; Stockport; Tameside. Including Trafford there are 7 LAs working together to implement a local House Project. The agreement highlights the benefits of a local house project;
 - Provides a pathway for young people to get their own secure, safe housing
 - Young People have good homes and support that's helping them have the best start in their adult lives. That they have more stability and less moves.
 - Increasing capacity of good quality and affordable homes for care leavers in GM
 - Strong and ongoing support to build networks and resilience for our care experienced young people
 - Working together at scale, creativity, flexibility and fluidity
 - Constantly evolving, growing and led by young people
 - To enable and empower GM young people to work together, gain skills and access the right support to live independently in good quality housing which ends on their terms
 - One stop service shared with other LA's
 - Scheme designed by young people
 - Develop increased flexible offer and quality accommodation across GM
 - Financial savings based on reduced cost of externally commissioned placements.
- 4.2 In line with a decision made by the Corporate Director for Children's Services to proceed with the House Project pursuant to delegated authority, legal documentation has been circulated amongst Trafford legal, information governance and HR colleagues to obtain relevant advice. A version of the agreement has now been agreed in principle. There is a separate contract with the NHP to access approximately £6k for psychological support which has also been shared with the relevant officers.

4.3 The intention is once all parties have signed the agreements, recruitment will begin with the aim of implementing the House Project from April 2022. This time line will see our young people potentially move into their first tenancies in September to December 2022.

5.0 Project Resource

5.1 The success of House Projects nationally are heavily influenced by the appointment of skilled and experienced staff who have the right value base, excellent communication skills and are driven by the principle that with support young people can own the solutions to the challenges they face.

5.2 The NHP have Job Descriptions and Person Specifications for the roles of Project Lead and Facilitators and the NHP will form part of the recruitment process for staff appointments.

5.3 Within the GM Agreement, Manchester City Council will lead on the recruitment of facilitators for all local projects. All staff working under the GM Collaborative Agreement will be employed by Manchester Council.

5.4 Recruitment of the following posts will take place in one round once all local authorities have signed up to the GM Collaborative Agreement.

- Local facilitators (one per LA) x 6
- Project GM Lead x 2
- Project GM Co-ordinator x 1

5.5 As part of the recruitment for the posts being created all recruitment options will be explored, including any potential secondment opportunities from Trafford Council which provides a benefit of this being knowledge of our young people and place. Under Part 3 of the Council's Constitution it is required that the decision for the making of agreements with other local authorities for the placing of staff at the disposal of those other authorities has to be taken by the Executive. This approval is now sought from the Executive in order to enable exploration of any potential secondment option in relation to Trafford employees.

5.6 Local facilitators are supported by the GM lead and co-ordinators and will attend regular communities of practice.

6.0 Financial Position

6.1 The House Project is an invest to save project as costs of the scheme will be offset by reductions in placement costs currently being incurred.

6.2 There are four elements to the costs of the House Project:

- A) The contribution to the GM Lead and Co-ordinator roles
- B) The associated management fee to MCC for their lead role in the GM collaboration.
- C) The payment to NHP for the supply of psychological support to House Project staff to ensure there is a trauma informed response to supporting young people.
- D) A local facilitator

6.3 The cost of the above are set out below:-

Annual Cost Breakdown

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
£61,936	£74,436	£69,436

- 6.6 Young people will be selected for the project, which will be driven by a willingness to engage and the benefit of the project to the young person. It is envisaged that there will be a reduction in costs as these young people move from their current placement to house project tenancies.
- 6.7 These savings will be carefully tracked once young people begin to move into their HP tenancies. They will be based on the trajectory of where a young person was placed at the time of joining the project vs the lower cost of House Project rent and utilities (estimated at approximately £168 per week).
- 6.8 The average weekly costs for placements as at September 2021 is as follows:-
- residential - £4,034
 - Supported accommodation - £1,285.

Therefore weekly savings would be as follows:-

- Residential - £3,866
 - Supported accommodation - £1,117
- 6.9 At this stage the young people who would be supported through the House Project have not yet been identified and the saving will depend on the age at which the young person starts the House project, at which point they are ready for a tenancy and the current cost of their placement. All young people will be in the project for approximately 6-9 months before taking on their first tenancy.

Therefore to cover the costs of the project in the first year this would require 1 young person currently residing in an external residential placement or 4 young people in supported accommodation to take up a HP tenancy. This is based on a young person moving at 17 years 8 months.

7.0 Recruitment of young people.

- 7.1 The selection of young people to be supported through the House Project will be led by the Trafford steering group made up of children's social care and education and commissioning leads. To date frontline staff have been briefed on the model and a selection criteria will be drafted; the model requests young people who are aged 16 ½ years and the tenancy will be offered before their 18th birthday. From outcomes and financial perspective we are keen to support those who currently reside in external placements, although we are not limited to this.
- 7.2 Ultimately the decision to join the project is the young person's personal choice. We will also give consideration to how we manage the wider messages to care experienced young people, noting only 4-6 young people can be accepted onto each annual cohort.
- 7.3 There will be careful consideration about how much support a young person would need to participate and their ability to work within a peer network. An information

pack for young people considering the project will be available to download and will include referral information and application process.

- 7.4 Trafford young people have attended two GM meetings so far to share their views of the project and their experience in developing their independence. To date the Trafford young people involved have been very supportive of the model, and have said it would provide the support young people need.

8.0 Governance

- 8.1 The House Project is a joint initiative across commissioning, children's services and housing partners. The project is co-led by representatives from commissioning and children's services.
- 8.2 A Trafford steering group will meet fortnightly to progress implementation via project plan and will have delivery oversight. The group consists of social care, education and commissioning colleagues and in time will extend to include health, housing and wider business partners.
- 8.3 The leads will be involved in the regular GM Collaborative meetings and also meet with NHP leads.
- 8.4 A GM Project Board will be established to provide structure, monitoring, development, and planning. The Board will include strategic leads from each Participating Authority, membership of the partner housing providers, NHP and officers. The Terms of Reference will be agreed within one Calendar month of the first meeting held in March 2022. The Project Board shall provide quarterly reports to the GM Care Leavers Board and the GM AD Group and each Participating Authority.
- 8.5 The GM Project Board will provide summary annual reports to the GM DCS group which will provide overview of project performance; it will appoint a chair and vice chair from the Lead Authority and housing providers and be responsible for the overall strategic direction of the GM Collaborative.
- 8.6 MCC will establish and support a Young Persons Board with representatives of the Participating Authorities and will consider agenda items for the main Board.
- 8.7 Locally, the Trafford Steering Group will report into both the Stable Home Group (sub group of the corporate parenting board) and Children's Directorate Management Team and Corporate Leadership Team, as required.

Other Options

The alternative option is to continue commissioning external placements to support young people develop their independent living skills and for young people to continue the current pathway to applying to independent tenancy agreements. This would not necessarily support the gaining formally recognized skills accreditation and training it would further not ensure consistent access to the ongoing practical and emotional, trauma informed support the House Project can offer and so the alternative does not offer best value for money. Trafford's Sufficiency Strategy has identified current practice as a challenge and the House Project is an option to address the sufficiency challenge.

Consultation

Trafford young people have attended two NHP meetings and on both occasions shared their support for a local House Project. Staff have been briefed on the proposed plans and are aware there will be secondment opportunities. If approved by the Executive the relevant officers will support a fair process to promoting any employment opportunities presented by the project.

Reasons for Recommendation

The House Project approach originated from a conversation between young people and staff in a Local Authority (LA). It has been subsequently developed phases as part of the DfE Innovation Programme and the Charity was established to not only support Local House Projects but to gather the learning, codify the fidelity and drive improvements as a learning organisation. The framework for the House Project has supporting evaluations from both Cambridge and York University. The Manchester project has been established and the model of GM collaboration enables Trafford to trial this approach on a smaller scale, sharing risk and reduces initial investment to test the effectiveness.

Care leaver provision within the LA falls in to the regulatory inspection frameworks conducted by Ofsted and whilst not an evaluation partner their feedback of local House Projects that they have inspected are positive.

"The House Project is an innovative and highly valued service that is making a significant difference for care leavers. The service helps young people to build confidence and to make friends for life, through preparation for independence & the provision of secure and affordable accommodation. Young people said to inspectors that being involved in the project makes them feel like they have a family" - Islington Ofsted report 2020

"Those care leavers who have additional needs benefit from involvement with the 'House project', which offers properties and intensive ongoing support to help them successfully maintain their tenancies" - Stoke-On-Trent Ofsted Monitoring visit - 2021

"When necessary, intensive support is provided, and some care leavers access a comprehensive pre- and post-tenancy training programme via the National House Project. The House project successfully supports young people to maintain their tenancies and live independently, which is valued by young people" - Warwickshire Ofsted report 2021

Engaging in the GM House Project provides the opportunity to improve the outcomes of Trafford care experienced young people, address one aspect of our sufficiency challenges and create longer term savings as an alternative to externally commissioned placements and future tenancy breakdowns in adulthood

It is recommended that Executive:

- Note the intention for Trafford Council to participate in the House Project;
- Approve the making of any necessary agreements with other local authorities for the placing of staff at the disposal of those other authorities in relation to the House Project;
- Delegate the ability to the Corporate Director for Children's Services to agree terms and conditions for the placement of Staff at the disposal of other Local Authorities in consultation with the Corporate Director for Governance and Community Strategy for the purposes of the House Project.

Key Decision (as defined in the Constitution): No

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? N/A)

Finance Officer Clearance *(type in initials)*.....HZ.....

Legal Officer Clearance *(type in initials)*.....DS.....

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Jill McQueen", with a horizontal line underneath.

CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.

